**System of UK Government**

Constitution

* No single written constitution, which is not to say there is an unwritten constitution.
* Constitution is a series of other laws including common law, statute law and international treaties/laws.
* Unwritten aspects are royal powers and parliamentary convention.

Monarchy

* The monarch is the head of state but not the head of government.
* Power to:
* Dissolve Parliament
* Declare war
* Appoint MPs/PMs/Judges/Military officers
* Grant honours
* Head of Church of England
* Royal assent to laws passed by UK and devolved parliaments.

Prime Minister

* “Her Majesty’s Government”
* Prime Minister & other Ministers of State (recommended by PM to HM)
* PM must be a member of House of Commons, and leader of the party with the majority of support in the Commons. Most ministers are also members of the House of Commons, however there are some ministers in the House of Lords. There are government representatives for every ministry in both Houses.
* Oversees the operation of the Civil service.
* Recommends appointments to HM.

Cabinet

* Supreme decision making body in government, with the PM ‘first among equals’.
* Made up of senior ministers.
* Decisions become government policy.

Parliament

* Based at Westminster (hence ‘Westminster system’)
* Can legislate for UK as whole, or for parts, but will not normally legislate for devolved areas.
* Responsible for:
  + Defence
  + Foreign affairs
  + Economic and monetary policy
  + Social security
  + Employment
  + Equal opportunity
  + Trade
  + Public welfare (education, NHS)
* Subject to obligations to EU
* Normally acts according to convention (traditions) rather than creating laws to perpetuate its rule, for example.
* Three parts of Parliament
  + House of Commons
  + House of Lords
  + Sovereign

House of Commons

* 646 elected Members of Parliament (MPs), 529 English constituencies (82%), 40 Welsh constituencies, 59 Scottish constituencies and 18 constituencies in Northern Ireland.
* General Election is held after Parliament is dissolved.
* A by-election follows death or resignation of an MP.

The Speaker

* Chief officer of the House of Commons. Maintains order within the house, has the power to expel unruly or troublesome members, has the casting vote in the case of a tie during voting.
* Elected from within the members of Parliament.
* Renounces all political affiliations on appointment, but this isn’t always adhered to.
* The speaker continues in office until Parliament is dissolved. By convention the house re-elect speakers who wish to continue.
* The Speaker is responsible for all administration within the House of Commons.

House of Lords

* Upper House
* Make laws, scrutinize governments, forum of independent expertise.
* Made of up of “Lords Spiritual” (Bishops) + Temporal (peers) – hereditary or life.
* Political affiliation or not
* 60% of time on legislation, 40% on scrutiny.
* Start with questioning of Government Ministers.

Parliamentary Sovereignty

* Parliament is supreme to all other democratic institutions.

Royal Prerogative

* By convention, powers previously exercised by the monarch but now exercised by ministers, e.g. areas of foreign policy, defence policy (e.g. declare war), granting appointments and honours.

Permanent and Impartial Civil Service

* A permanent and impartial civil service means that political appointments to the civil service is frowned upon and that members of the civil service do their duties to the best of their abilities no matter who is in government.

Devolved Government

* Some powers have been given to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from 1999.
* Scottish Parliament has responsibilities for: Agriculture, education and training, fisheries, health and community care, justice, transport.
* National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly have the same responsibilities as the Scottish parliament.